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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 21, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 21, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. YSK APPROVES ERDOGAN'S CANDIDACY IN SIIRT ELECTIONS
(Milliyet/Radikal/Turkiye) The Higher Election Council (YSK) approved AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan's candidacy in the March 9 Siirt elections. YSK had rejected Erdogan's candidacy application in the November 3 Parliamentary elections. Three people, including Nusret Cakiroglu of the Workers' Party (IP), had objected to the nomination of Erdogan as AK Party's first-listed candidate in Siirt. YSK rejected all the objections during its two-hour meeting on February 20. Tercuman reported that YSK had unanimously given a visa to Erdogan's nomination as AK Party's first-listed candidate.

3. MYSTERIOUS AMERICAN COMMANDER IN MARDIN
(Hurriyet) An unnamed American general arrived in Mardin in a private U.S. plane on February 20. Mardin Brigadier Commander Brigadier General Fahri Isildak met the general, for whom comprehensive security measures had been taken around the airport. Journalists were not allowed to take photographs. A helicopter affiliated with the Turkish Armed Forces also landed at the Mardin Airport.

4. TWO HUNDRED AMERICAN SOLDIERS DISPATCHED TO BATMAN
(Hurriyet) Of 1,000 U.S. soldiers who had arrived in Diyarbakir on February 16 and 17 in giant cargo planes for the modernization of Turkish bases, 200 people were sent to Batman. Cumhuriyet reported the arrival of 200 American soldiers at the Batman Air Base on February 19. The soldiers settled in tents that had been set up for them there. Preparations have been concluded for Patriot missiles from the Netherlands which are expected to arrive in Batman by the weekend. At night, cargo planes frequently land at the base, where Turkish Airlines (THY) flights have been suspended for the past week.

5. STINGER-MISSILE BATTERIES ARRIVE
(Hurriyet/Radikal) U.S.-flagged ship "Tellus" docked at the Iskenderun (Hatay) Port on February 19, unloading 422 military vehicles. Battery systems that can project missiles are among these vehicles. Striking among these vehicles were Hummer jeeps and Lancers on which Stinger missile batteries were mounted. Three other ships like "Tellus" are reportedly waiting in the Mediterranean. Four other ships carrying M-1 Abrams tanks and heavy military equipment are waiting to unload their cargoes at Iskenderun. If the Turkish parliament permits the coming of U.S. soldiers to Turkey, these ships will steer toward Iskenderun and Mersin ports. Otherwise, they will proceed to the Persian Gulf through the Suez Canal. Americans will pay the Iskenderun port USD 3 million per month. An agreement has also been signed with transportation companies with fleets of trailer trucks to transport the military vehicles. The trucks will have drivers and wait near the port area. Ten trailer trucks have been rented from Mersin's Koknar International Transportation Company. Each truck will receive a monthly payment of USD 2,000.

Milliyet reported that a crisis was experienced during the entrance of nine busloads of U.S. soldiers from Incirlik to the Iskenderun port. The soldiers had to wait in the buses for nearly an hour before they were admitted on to the port. A delay in the receipt by port officials of a list of these soldiers reportedly caused the crisis. Cumhuriyet reported that the unloading of U.S. tanks and other heavy equipment at the Iskenderun Port, prior to the passage of a memorandum for the use of bases and ports, caused controversy. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) reportedly gave permission for the unloading, which caused disturbances among other public organizations. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said the U.S. soldiers had arrived for modernization, while he denied having any information about the military equipment.

16. TURKISH TROOPS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

Cumhuriyet reported that 7,000 soldiers affiliated with the (Malatya-based) Second Army Command had crossed 10-14 kilometers into Iraq through Hakkari and Sirnak. Many tanks and armored vehicles were sent to the region, particularly to Zaho and Dahok, along with soldiers placed in strategic passages and hills. Also, preparations are underway to dispatch U.S. soldiers and materiel unloaded at the Iskenderun (Hatay) Port. Evrensel reported the deployment of additional troops, as well as hundreds of village guards familiar with northern Iraq, along the Iraqi border. The village guards will reportedly be used, especially in anti-RADEK/PKK operations.

17. INCREASED ACTIVITY CONTINUES AT INCIRLIK

Hurriyet reported an increase in the number of A-6 Intruder/EA-6B Prowler planes at Adana's Incirlik Air Base. Bolge reported the landing and taking off of many warplanes on February 20. According to the newspaper, doors to hangars near the runway were kept open, with officials working on some. The paper also pointed to increased activity in the number of flights, as well as in ground services. Modernization projects continue in some parts of the base.

18. WAR ALARM FOR HEALTH PERSONNEL

(Hurriyet/Tercuman) While preparations continue toward a possible war in Iraq, the Directorate General of the Red Crescent and Civil Defense switched to the "extraordinary situation" code, under the direction of the Health Ministry. Orders prepared for such extraordinary situations as wars and natural disasters have been put in effect. Temporary-duty timetables have also been prepared for hospitals and health personnel. An effort is also underway to provide health materials, medicine, and stock of blood, while the Health Ministry initiated an effort to purchase anthrax and smallpox vaccines from the U.S. Milli Gazete reported that the Red Crescent Adana Blood Center, through billboards, is urging citizens to donate blood. Turkiye quoted Red Crescent Society National President Dr. Ertan Gonen as saying the Society is ready for war in every respect. According to Evrensel, all public employees serving in the Southeast were ordered to be ready for a possible Iraq war.

19. CALL FOR BOYCOTTING U.S. PRODUCTS

(Bolge) Seyfullah Sariaslan, President of the Adana chapter of the Egitim-Bir Sen, together with other union members, held a press conference in Adana's Ugur Mumcu Square to voice opposition to war against Iraq. During the press conference, Sariaslan called on the public to boycott U.S. products. He wanted the U.S. to withdraw its military from the region and immediately evacuate from Turkish bases.

110. NEW ADANA GOVERNOR SAYS ONLY A MIRACLE CAN PREVENT WAR

(Hurriyet/Bolge) Adana's new Governor, Kemal Onal, who took office on February 20, said Adana had strategic importance in a possible U.S. operation against Iraq because of its Incirlik Air Base. "Unless a miracle takes place, there is the danger of a hot war near to us," he added. Onal stressed that the public would be informed

accurately about civil defense measures.

11. GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN DIYARBAKIR
(Turkiye) German Ambassador to Turkey Joseph Rudolf Schmidt arrived in Diyarbakir for contacts. Schmidt visited the Governor's Office and the Municipality and toured the province's historical sites. In answer to journalists' questions regarding a possible war in Iraq, Schmidt said that, as a member of NATO, his country would perform its responsibilities in the event of a possible U.S.-Iraq war. He added that German soldiers were not likely to take part in the ground operations and noted that the number of personnel to participate in an air operation was not known yet. He will later travel to Mardin.

12. PRO-OCALAN DEMONSTRATIONS
(Evrensel) Members of the Elazig Fundamental Rights and Freedoms Association Initiative and HADEP youths protested the isolation of jailed PKK/KADEK leader Abdullah Ocalan by lighting candles. In Van, youths staged demonstrations in three different locations calling for an end to Ocalan's isolation. Police raided several homes and arrested three people. A Mersin court released 12 of the 13 people, including Social Democrat Party (SDP) Provincial Chairman Huseyin Gur, arrested during the February 18 anti-war and anti-isolation protest in that province. The court ordered Gur to remain in custody for having read a press release during the protest demonstration. Seven of the 16 pro-Ocalan demonstrators arrested in Adana's Ceyhan district were ordered held in custody. In Batman, an investigation has been launched against 12 DEHAP officials, including the DEHAP provincial chairman, in connection with an anti-war and anti-isolation press release. The officials were summoned to the Prosecutor's Office for questioning.

13. HRA DIYARBAKIR OFFICIALS ACQUITTED
(Evrensel) A hearing was held in the Diyarbakir Court of General Criminal Jurisdiction on February 20 in the case of seven Diyarbakir Human Rights Association (HRA) officials charged with displaying posters during Newroz celebrations at the province's Southeastern Journalists' Society in 2002. Attorney Muharrem Erbey represented the defendants during the trial. In his defense, Erbey said that the defendants did not have the intention of committing crimes. Erbey requested his clients' acquittal. The court later acquitted the HRA officials. Prison terms ranging from six months to two years had been requested for the officials under Article 77/1 of the Associations Law.

14. TUNCELI MUNICIPALITY UNDER INVESTIGATION
(Evrensel) The Interior Ministry has launched an investigation against the municipality of Tunceli. The investigation stemmed from a complaint by the National Property Directorate General that the Municipality had been involved in misfeasance in the sale of municipal land.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

15. ECONOMIC REVIVAL POSTPONED UNTIL AN UNKNOWN DATE DUE TO WAR
Sabah columnist Esen Evran wrote that while Turkey is focused on tense Iraq bargaining ongoing with the U.S., the Southeast's agenda is much more intense. While a possible operation against Iraq is a brake on the economic revival expected to come after the economic crisis, everything in the Southeastern provinces has been on hold until an unknown date. Abdulkadir Konukoglu, President of the Gaziantep-based Sanko Holding Company, said he was disturbed by a possible war in Iraq, but there was not much he could do about it. "Everyone comes up and asks what we will do. I tell them to stay where they are. We do not have the strength to move our factories," he added. Gaziantep Chamber of Industry President Nejat Kocer pointed to uncertainty and shrinkage in business in the

region during this process. Diyarbakir Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kutbettin Arzu said the possible war in Iraq impacted the region. "In the west of the country, people postpone their purchase of television sets and overcoats, while people here in the region do not buy anything other than bread, sugar, and cooking oil," he noted. Turkiye cited Van Commodity Exchange President Feridun Irak as complaining that Turkey's total trade volume with its neighbors was around 5%, way below the desired level.

HOLTZ